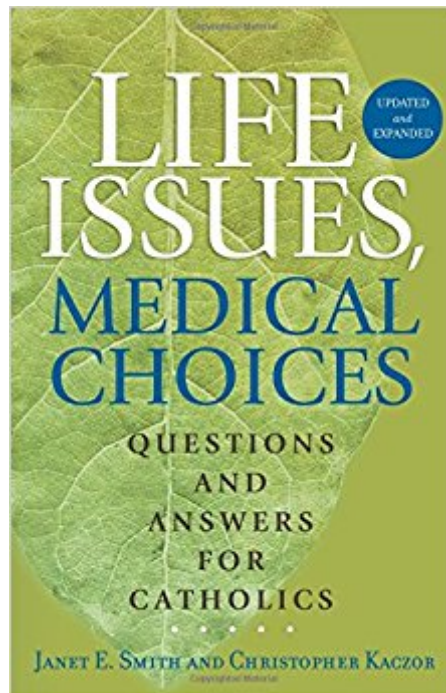




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# Life Issues, Medical Choices: Questions And Answers For Catholics



## Synopsis

Complex Issues. Thoughtful Answers. When is it right to remove a feeding tube from a patient? Are health care workers entitled to conscience protections? Should contraceptives be used for medical purposes? Is medical marijuana ever OK? Medical and technological advances have left millions of Catholics grappling with tough issues—dilemmas that will only multiply as technology and medicine continue to develop at an ever-faster pace. In this updated and expanded edition of *Life Issues, Medical Choices*, two noted bioethicists explore fundamental principles of Catholic thought—in accessible, easy-to-understand language—to help you make decisions about complex medical and life issues.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

JANET E. SMITH is the Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. She wrote *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* and *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader*. She speaks nationally and internationally on the church's teaching on sexuality and on bioethics. Over one million copies of her talk "Contraception: Why Not" have been distributed. DR. CHRISTOPHER KACZOR holds a PH.D. from the University of Notre Dame, studied as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Cologne in Germany, and is the Robert H. Taylor Chair in Philosophy at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He wrote *Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition*, *The Edge of Life: Human Dignity and Contemporary Bioethics* and *How to Stay Catholic in College*.

This book and is organized into a question and answer format and a closing discussion of the Ten Commandments as can be applied to health care workers. This format is effectively presents the many health questions that arise in healthcare. I read this book in a few hours and gained a good understanding of the moral decisions that patients and healthcare workers may have to make.

In this easy-to-read book, two philosophers have combined their forces to provide a simple look at some complex matters. Bioethical concerns have taken on highly interdisciplinary characteristics and, therefore, it is next to impossible to write about them without entering into legal, medical, and theological considerations. To expect a book of this size to deal with all of these various features of the topics would be asking far too much. Rather, fifty-seven questions are posed in six chapters and answers are provided which speak to the crux of the matter at hand. A seventh chapter seeks to extrapolate for medical personnel and patients guidelines from the Ten Commandments. Again, the popular style of the writing does not make any pretense of delving into the most profound analysis of the various problems but does bring forth clear solutions which are readily understandable by a reader with even a simple background in matters related to Bioethics (not exclusively in the medical setting). Likewise, this review does not presume to scrutinize fully all of the various responses given. In the first chapter, the groundwork is laid for what will follow in the subsequent sections of the book by examining fundamental concepts. The value of life, the double effect principle, and the notion of intrinsically evil actions are set forth in view of their utility in arriving at ethical judgments. A welcome question on suffering also is included. As seen in the title, the authors directed their work to a primarily Catholic audience and this explains the reason for development of the binding nature of Magisterial teaching along with Revelation and natural law reasoning. Apart from this specific concern, the book just as well could have been presented without reference to any particular religion. Catholic teaching about Bioethics is directed to all persons, not only Catholics. Moreover, in the attempt to distinguish various levels of Catholic Bioethical thought, not always was it completely evident where the line was to be drawn between authoritative pronouncements and theological reflection. However, new issues were confronted in an effort by the authors to contribute to the maturation which theological progress often must undergo. The second, third and fourth chapters are closely related to each other inasmuch as they cover the topics of the beginning of life, reproductive technologies and the regulation of births. The authors do not hesitate to conclude that "the child in the womb is a person" and this is the substantial basis upon which the respect for embryonic human life is founded. Without specifically making mention of it, it is obvious that a

personalistic approach is present in the consideration of the exclusion of reproductive techniques which would circumvent natural generation of human life. Those familiar with the work of Dr. Smith will welcome and appreciate the lucid treatment of the difference between contraception and natural family planning although it is surprising that the Billings Ovulation Method is not mentioned specifically. In the fifth chapter (on end-of-life issues) clear and simple explanations of the immorality of euthanasia and the distinction between obligatory ordinary means and non-obligatory extraordinary means of treatment are provided. Catholics, along with others, are in great need of guidance in these matters and it is urgent that formation be provided so that before health crises occur some manner of approaching decision-making is already in place. A remarkable and useful discussion of breath death criteria sheds light on what is a budding debate among ethicists. The evaluation of cooperation in the evil deeds of others is one of the most complicated areas of ethical theory. Nevertheless, in our complicated world it is a reality which must be examined carefully. The sixth chapter seeks to propose guidance (most particularly in medical scenarios) as to when such cooperation might be permissible or when it might be necessary to avoid it. Here, although examples are provided, most of the indications are at the theoretical level. Even though this is not a book written purposely for academics, a few comments on technique may be in order. One is surprised to find no index; internet citations only send one to main pages leaving the reader to search within the site for specific material; scant bibliographical information is given in the section on Helpful Resources. Scripture and Church documents are infrequently cited and when references are made this is most often done without a quotation. An excellent feature of this book is that it provides not only Bioethical rules, but also the reasons for those rules. Examples and applications are very realistic and hands-on and are therefore very vivid portrayals of principles in action. If a theologian, a lawyer, and a doctor were to edit this book, undoubtedly some refinements would be in order and the location of some of the questions might be altered. As it stands, it is a worthwhile and helpful effort to bring Catholic answers to those who are reflecting upon life issues and medical choices.

Excellent book

I bought this for my daughter who is young and married. It is great work because it is in line with Christian teaching.

Excellent and reliable witness to the Church's teaching regarding the dignity of the human person and healthcare choices

The book is easily read. It opens a long time tradition in the Catholic Church on how to deal with life issues and its moral applications. it is affordable.

I used this as a class text with students who found the explanations clear, readable and helpful in examining the spectrum of issues we can face from the beginning to the end of life as well as important questions in between and ethical principles involved in each. It will continue on the book list for my bioethics class.

Very important review of Q & A's about moral issues of Eugenesis, Euthanasia, In vitro >Fertilization, pregnancy, abortion, premarital sex, etc.

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